

SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY & REPORTING PROCEDURE



Introduction.

The health and well being of all staff employed by the Students' Union is essential if the institution is to achieve its strategic objectives. The purpose of policy is to ensure that the Students' Union meets its obligations under employment and Health and Safety legislation with regard to staff welfare and absence and that all staff are treated fairly and equitably.

The cost of sickness absence to the Students' Union is very low due to the commitment shown by our dedicated staff members.

General Principles.

1. This policy applies to all staff employed by the Students' Union.
2. Employees who are absent from work due to sickness will be treated consistently, with respect, understanding and sensitivity.
3. Every effort will be made to assist an employee's recovery and return to work following sickness absence and where necessary seek the advice of the Membership Services Manager.
4. In the event of an employee being unable to return to work due to disability the Students' Union will seek to make reasonable adjustments for the employee to return.
5. In the event of an employee who has been on long term sickness and there is no prospect of the employee returning to work their employment may need to be terminated on medical grounds.
6. Line Managers will be responsible for monitoring and controlling sickness absence on a day-to-day basis as they are likely to be aware of background circumstances that may be affecting the employee's attendance at work.
7. Appropriate training will be provided for managers to equip them with the skills and knowledge to implement the policy in a fair, sensitive and effective manner.
8. The Membership Services Manager will give advice and guidance to line managers on ways of dealing with staff attendance.

Responsibility of Employee.

Employees:

- must attend work when fit to do so, unless time away from work has been agreed with their line manager, eg attending a training event or conference. If they become sick during their working day they must advise their line manager, prior to leaving the premises, that they are leaving work.

- must advise their line manager, wherever possible in person, by telephone, that they are sick as early as possible on the first day of any sickness absence. This is also applicable if they have agreed time away from the workplace, working from home or attending a training event or conference.

- must give brief details of the reason for their absence and, if possible, estimate their likely return to work. If possible, details of any outstanding or urgent issues should also be given. This contact should be made by the employee themselves, unless of course, there are extenuating circumstances.

- must complete a self certification form for all periods of sickness absence. Any absence longer than 7 calendar days must be supported by a doctor's medical certificate. Failure to produce a doctor's medical certificate will result in the absence being considered unauthorised and unpaid and disciplinary action may be taken if appropriate.

- must maintain regular contact with their line manager, or membership Services Manager in cases of sensitivity, with time scales for this contact dependant on the nature of their illness. This contact will include progress towards recovery and return to work details, as appropriate.

- should attend appointments with Membership Services Manager when required. This is to ensure that any decisions taken by the Students' Union include medical advice on their fitness for work, any adjustments that need to be considered and also to plan any return to work programme.

- should ensure that medical advice and treatment is received as appropriate.

- should not undertake any work/activities outside work incompatible with their illness or that may delay their recovery or return to work, or act in contravention of medical advice.

- must advise their line manager or Membership Services Manager of any medical condition they have which may affect their attendance or performance at work, or endanger other employees, students or members of the general public. Under its obligations of the Disability Discrimination Act the Students' Union will consider any reasonable adjustments to the workplace in order to assist the employee.

- must understand that they have a shared obligation to manage stress in the workplace in order to comply with Health and Safety legislation.

- must take responsibility for their attendance at work.

Responsibility of Line Managers.

Line Managers are responsible for the management of sickness absence, in conjunction with the Personnel department.

Employees will be treated consistently and with respect, understanding and sensitively.

Line managers must:

- implement the policy in an equitable, sensitive and effective manner.

- ensure that staff understand the sickness absence rules and procedures and are aware of their responsibilities under it.
- comply with sickness absence reporting and recording requirements of the Students' Union.
- regularly review sickness absence levels of staff and take appropriate action needed to prevent and reduce levels.
- for long term absences, i.e. longer than 4 weeks, liaise with Personnel in order to ensure that return to work plans are appropriate, implemented and monitored.
- maintain regular contact with staff on long term sickness absence, whilst being sensitive to their needs and the nature of their illness.
- be aware of their role with regard to confidentiality.

Responsibility of The Membership Services Manager (Personnel)

The Membership Services Manager will:

- be responsible for the maintenance of computerised sickness absence records.
- provide regular information to line managers on the levels of sickness within their areas of responsibility.
- provide advice, guidance and support to line managers to maximise attendance levels.
- monitor action taken by line managers to ensure that staff are treated equally.
- monitor all staff who are absent for longer than 4 weeks and in conjunction with the line manager offer home visits in order to discuss their sickness and when appropriate facilitate their rehabilitation back into the work place.
- liaise with employees, line managers and other bodies to ensure that any return to work plans are appropriate, implemented and monitored.
- offer training to line managers to ensure that this policy is applied fairly, consistently, sensitively and confidentially.
- advise employees about changes to their SSP or OSP payments.

Entitlement to Sick Leave and Pay.

Is given in appropriate terms and conditions. Entitlements are dependant on service with the Students' Union.

Reporting Procedures – What to do if off sick.

1. All staff unable to attend work due to sickness must contact their line manager, in person, as early as possible and also indicate the cause of the sickness absence and its likely duration. They must also advise their line manager of any outstanding or urgent issues.
2. If an employee becomes ill at work, requiring them to leave, they must advise their line manager accordingly. This should be prior to leaving the premises.
3. If the employee is working off site and away from work premises and becomes ill, they must contact their line manager, in person, and advise them of their sickness.
4. If the absence continues for longer than 7 calendar days a doctor's medical certificate must be obtained for all of the absence after that date. Should the employee wish to return to work before the date on the doctor's certificate they must obtain a further doctor's medical certificate confirming that they are fit to return to work. Continuous doctor's medical certificates must be obtained until the employee returns to work.
5. Upon return to work, regardless of the length of sickness, all employees must complete a Self Certification Form for the first 7 days of absence, unless covered by a doctor's medical certificate.

Return to Work Discussions.

After all periods of absence a return to work discussion should take place. Line managers will ensure that all staff have a return to work discussion after a period of sickness. If the member of staff has been absent for less than four weeks this will probably be an informal meeting. If the member of staff has been absent for longer than 4 weeks this will be a formal meeting as previous discussions between the line manager, a representative of Personnel and the member of staff will have taken place to agree a return to work plan. The purpose of all return to work discussions, either informal or formal, are to:

1. welcome back the employee.
2. enquire about their health and ensure they are fit for work.
3. identify any work based or domestic problems.
4. establish if any help and support can be provided by the University College.
5. ensure that self certification and doctor's notes are complete and that dates are correct.
6. if appropriate, to inquire, what steps the employee is taking to prevent the sickness absence reoccurring.

If an employee has been on long term sickness absence leave and has had their pay reduced, and they return to work on phased hours they will receive their full pay during a planned return to work. If it is not possible for the employee to return to their full hours and full duties, even with reasonable adjustments, the University College will consider redeployment of the employee. In the event of this situation arising full discussions will occur with the employee.

The University College may request, at any stage, that the member of staff attend an appointment at Occupational Health in order that medical advice can be obtained to inform any decisions taken.

Monitoring Sickness Absence.

If sickness absence levels of an employee are considered high the member of staff may be invited to a formal meeting, which will include The Membership Services Manager. If there are no underlying health problems the Students' Union may consider implementing the Capability Procedure. As this is a formal meeting the member of staff may be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague.

Reporting of accidents and dangerous occurrences (as stated in Health and Safety section of Employee Handbook).

All accidents, near misses and hazards must be reported to the Health, Safety and Fire Manager on the 'Accident/Dangerous Occurrences' form. These forms can be obtained from the Students' Union Office, First Aiders, and the Membership Services Manager. The form must be completed and when signed sent to the Membership Services Manager.

Alcohol, Drugs and Smoking.

The University College has an Alcohol and Drugs Policy Statement and chronic abuse of alcohol or drugs which cause unacceptable work performance will be treated as a sickness in the first instance as a medical problem and medical advice, will be sought. Consultation will occur with the employee and staff who are suffering from alcohol or drug abuse and they will be treated with sensitivity and care to help the employee back to full health.

However, drinking on duty or reporting for work under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence.

Ill Health Retirement (from current Principal Terms and Conditions).

Where a member of staff has been referred to a Doctor due to long term sickness absence and where the Doctor decides that the member of staff is permanently incapable of carrying out the full range of duties of their post because of permanent ill-health and where no suitable alternative employment or reasonable adjustments can not be made then the member of staff may be retired on the grounds of permanent ill-health.

Doctors, Dentist and Hospital Appointments.

Staff are normally expected to make doctors and dental appointments outside their normal working hours. If this is not possible appointments should be made at the beginning or the end of the day. Line manager agreement must be sought prior to attending appointments in normal working time. Staff will not be required to make up time spent at doctors or dentists. A common sense and fair approach will be used by line managers with regard to travelling to and from doctors and dentists.

Staff attending hospital appointments will not be required to make up time spent attending these appointments as long as an appointment card/letter is shown to line managers prior to attendance. This time will not be recorded as sickness absence.